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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /070 W
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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5047
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 2296

BRUSSELS FOR USEEC

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GR
SUBJ: UDC IN FINAL COLLAPSE

REF: 77 ATHENS 10902 (NOTAL)

1. THE UNION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER (UDC), IN UPROAR SINCE BEING TROUNCED IN THE NOVEMBER 1977 ELECTIONS, TOOK ANOTHER, AND QUITE PROBABLY FINAL, STEP TOWARDS ITS TOTAL DISSOLUTION AS A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AT ITS MARCH 19 SPECIAL PARTY CONVENTION. THE CONVENTION, WHICH WAS PACKED WITH HIS OWN FOLLOWERS BY INTERIM PARTY LEADER (IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIRMAN OF THE UDC'S TEMPORARY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE) JOHN ZIGDIS, ELECTED ZIGDIS AS LARTY LEADER. ZIGDIS THUS TURNED ASIDE A CHALLENGE BY A GROUP WHICH LOOKED ULTIMATELY TO FORMER UDC PRESIDENT GEORGE MOVROS FOR LEADERSHIP AND WAS SEEKING A COMPROMISE SOLUTION TO THE PARTY'S PROBLEMS.

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2. THE UDC CONVENTION FOLLOWED MONTHS OF INCREASINGLY ANGRY PARTY SQUABBLING, WHICH ZIGDIS' AUTHOCRATIC AND QUIRKY PERSONALITY ONLY MADE WORSE. BY THE TIME OF THE CONVENTION, DEPUTY ATHANASSIOS KANELLOPOULOS HAD RESIGNED FROM THE PARTY AND BECOME AN INDEPENDENT; ZIGDIS HAD THROWN FIVE OTHER DEPUTIES OUT OF THE UDC (JOHN PESMAZOGLOU, VIRGINIA TSOUDEROU, STYLIANOS

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PAPATHEMELIS, CONTANTINOS ALAVANOS, AND DIMITRIOS
KARDARAS); AND EXPELLED THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY'S
MINISCULE YOUTH ORGANIZATION WHICH OPPOSED ZIGDIS
FROM THE BEGINNING. THE MARCH 19 CONVENTION SAW
FURTHER BITTER ATTACKS BY ZIGDIS ON GEORGE MAVROS AND
THE EXPLUSION FROM THE UDC BY ZIGDIS OF THER RESPECTED
PARTY LEADERS WHO LINED UP AGAINST HIM. THERE IS
SOME TLAK THAT THE DEFEATED ANTI-ZIGDIS FORCES MAY NOW
SEEK TO FORM THEIR OWN PARTY.

3. COMMENT: ZIGDIS WILL KEAD A RUMP PARTY, AT BEST
(THE 15 UDC DEPUTIES ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT IN NOVEMBER
HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO 9 OR FEWER). THE COLLAPSE OF THE
UDC IS AN UNFORTUNATE DEVELOPEMENT FOR GREEK DEMOCRACY.
THE TRADITIONAL CENTER IS NOW UP FOR GRABS AND,
AS A RESULT, THE POTENTIAL FOR DANGEROUS POLARIZATION HAS
INCREASED. AMONG THE COMPETITORS FOR THE REMAINS OF
THE CENTER WILL BE CARAMANLIS, PAPANDREOUS, AND, AS
AN OUTSIDE BET, POSSIBLY CONSTANTINOS MITSOKAKIS. AT
THIS WRITING, PAPANDREOUS, WHO LAYS CLAIM TO
BEING THE LEGITIMATE HEIR OF THE OLD CENTER UNION
HEADED BY HIS FATHER, IS PROBABLY AN ODDS ON FAVORITE
TO PICK UP A MAJOR SHARE OF THE 600,000 VOTES CAST FOR
THE UDC IN THE LAST ELECTION. TO DO SO MOST EFFECTIVELY,
HOWEVER, HE WILL HAVE TO ATTRACT SIGNIFICANT UDC
POLITICAINS TO PASOK, SOMETING HE HAS NOT SUCCEEDED
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IN DOING TO DATE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE CENTER
INCLUDES SOME OF THE MORE TALENTED MEN IN GREEK PUBLIC
LIFE AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT CARAMANLIS WILL EVENTUALLY
INVITE SOME OF THEM TO JOIN HIS GOVERNMENT IN A BID
TO STRENGTHEN BOTH IS POPULAR SUPPORT AND THE GOVERN-
MENT'S EFFICENCY AND PERFORMANCE.
MCCLOSKEY

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